

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1-9 and 11-20 are amended. Claims 1 and 13 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Drawings

The Examiner has not indicated whether or not the drawings have been accepted. Clarification is requested in the next official communication.

Claim for Priority

It is gratefully appreciated that the Examiner has recognized the Applicant's claim for foreign priority.

Acknowledgement of Information Disclosure Statement

It is gratefully appreciated that the Examiner has acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 22, 2004.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 1 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, the Applicant has amended claims 1-9 and 11-20 to correct each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. The Applicant

submits that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicant regards as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and § 103(a)

Claims 1-8 and 11-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Bjork et al. (U.S. 6,516,744), and claims 9 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bjork et al. in view of Tucker (U.S. 5,959,526). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the present application, independent claim 1 is amended herein to recite a combination of features directed to a method for automatically identifying identities of milk producing animals including the steps of:

- identifying said milk producing animals when entering said row of milking stalls (14) in serial order by means of said animal identification station;
- identifying a first one of the milk producing animals in the milking stall located at a far end (14b) of said row of milking stalls by means of a first identification member (24) provided in said milking stall located at the far end (14b) of said row of milking stalls;
- identifying a second one of the milk producing animals in the milking stall located at said front end (14a) of said row of milking stalls (14) by means of a second identification member (26) provided in said milking stall located at the front end (14a) of said row of milking stalls;

- identifying a third one of the milk producing animals in a milking stall located between said far and front ends of said row of milking stalls by means of a third identification member (28) provided in said milking stall located between said far and front ends of said row of milking stalls;

- comparing the identities of the first, second, and third identification members (24, 26, 28), respectively, with the first, last and n'th identities, respectively, of said animal identification station (20), and when counting from said far end of said row of milking stalls, said milking stall located between said far and front ends of said row of milking stalls is defined as the n'th milking stall; and

- depending on said comparison, verifying the identities of at least some of said milk producing animals in said row of milking stalls.

In addition, independent claim 13 is amended herein to recite a combination of features directed to an apparatus for automatically identifying identities of milk producing animals including:

a row of milking stalls (14) accessible in serial order to a plurality of milk producing animals (12) from a front end (14a) of the row of milking stalls; and

an animal identification station (20) arranged in the front end of said row of milking stalls for identifying said milk producing animals (20) when passing serially there through to enter said row of milking stalls (14), the milking parlor (10) adapted to automatically verify identities of said milk producing animals in said row of milking stalls, and further comprising:

- a first identification member (24) for identifying the milk producing animal in the milking stall located at a far end (14b) of said row of milking stalls (14);
- a second identification member (26) for identifying the milk producing animal in the milking stall located at said front end (14a) of said row of milking stalls (14);
- a third identification member (28) for identifying the milk producing animal in a milking stall located between said far and front ends (14a, 14b) of said row of milking stalls (14);
- a comparator (38) for comparing the identities of the first, second, and third identification members (24, 26, 28), respectively, with the first, last and n'th identities, respectively, from said animal identification station (20), and when counting from said far end of said row of milking stalls, said milking stall located between said far and front ends of said row of milking stalls is defined as the n'th milking stall ; and
- a verifier (40) for, depending on said comparison, verifying the identities of at least some of said milk producing animals in said row of milking stalls.

The milking parlor, in which the present invention is implemented, comprises a row of stalls and is so arranged that it allows only one animal at a time to enter the row of stalls (i.e. the row of stalls is accessible to the animals in serial order). Each stall has a gate that is controllable so that the first animal has to enter the stall located in the far end, the next animal has to enter the stall located next to the stall located in the far end, and so on. The last animal enters the stall located in the front end. Ideally, this is the case and then it would have been sufficient to have an identification station at the front end and the order of

have an identification station at the front end and the order of identifications of the animals could be correlated to the individual stalls, which the animals enter. By such procedure individual-specific milk extraction data can be recorded and stored, i.e. the data can be associated with the identified animals. This is prior art and is discussed in the introductory chapter of the application.

However, in non-ideal cases the identification may not always be made correct. There may be several reasons to this. (See the discussion on pages 2-3 of the application). Further, it is not possible to know if the identification is not correct.

The present invention as claimed In independent claims 1 and 13, remedies the problem by (1) providing three individual identification members in three different stalls (the first, n'th, and last ones as counted from the far end), (2) comparing the identities of the identification members with the first, n'th and last identifications made by the identification station located at the front end, and (3) verifying some identities based on the comparison.

For instance, if the identity of the identification member in the first stall coincides with the first identity of the identification station AND the identity of the identification member in the n'th stall coincides with the n'th identity of the identification station, the identities of all animals between them could be verified (including the animals in the first and n'th stalls).

Similarly, if the identity of the identification member in the n'th stall coincides with the n'th identity of the identification station AND the identity of the identification member in

Hereby, individual-specific milk extraction data can be recorded for animals having verified identities, whereas no individual-specific milk extraction data will typically be recorded for animals having unverified identities. That is, the invention provides for improved identification and thereby improved records of individual-specific milk extraction data. Hereby, management and production can be enhanced.

In contrast to the present invention, Bjork et al. merely disclose another kind of milking system. The row of stalls is not accessible to the animals in serial order. The system does not comprise a row of milking stalls. The system does not include one identification station at the front end of the row of stalls, by which animals are identified in serial order, AND identification members in three different milking stalls, by which animals therein are identified. There are several identification devices, but these are used for entirely different purposes. Regarding the identification gate 26, for instance, Bjork et al. state that it is not required for identification purposes, see col. 4, lines 37-40.

In summary, the system by Bjork et al. provide no comparison between identities made by different identification devices and it does not provide any kind of verification depending on any kind of comparison.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of features set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 13 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Bjork et al.

At least for the reasons described above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of features as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 13 is not disclosed

At least for the reasons described above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of features as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 13 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Bjork et al. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Independent claims 1 and 13 are in condition for allowance.

Dependent Claims

As noted, dependent claims 2-9, 11, 12 and 14-20 have been amended merely to place them in better form. All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel limitations set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) are respectfully requested.

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Amendment dated January 4, 2007
Reply to Office Action of September 28, 2006

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CONCLUSION

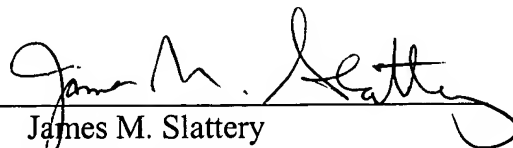
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 208-4030 (Direct Line).

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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